



# Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Asa Hutchinson  
José R. Romero, MD, Secretary of Health

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1<sup>st</sup> Revision May 18, 2020

Phase 2 Revision Effective: June 15, 2020

Modified September 9, 2020: requirements for self-service/buffets

Converted to Guidance February 26, 2021

Revision converting mask requirement to guidance, effective April 1, 2021

## **Guidance on Restaurant Dine-in Operations**

The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, has sole authority over all instances of quarantine, isolation, and restrictions on commerce and travel throughout Arkansas, as necessary and appropriate to control disease in the state of Arkansas as authorized by Ark. Code Ann. §20-7-109—110. Community spread of COVID-19 remains active within the State. Therefore, the Arkansas Department of Health makes the following recommendations for how to best prevent transmission of COVID-19 in Restaurants and other Retail Food Establishments.

- Capacity of the venue should not exceed the ability of attendees to maintain six (6) feet physical distance between individuals or household groups.
- Seating should be adjusted to maintain six (6) feet between occupied seats at adjacent tables.
- Self-service operations, including, but not limited to, salad bars, buffets, and condiment bars should operate with the following requirements:
  - Capacity of the buffet area should be dependent on the ability of customers to maintain six (6) feet physical distance from each other at all times.
  - Facility should provide an employee to monitor physical distancing of six (6) feet is maintained.
  - Masks are required for all persons within the customer self-service area.
  - Hand sanitizer and single-use food service gloves should be located at all entrances to the customer self-service area along with signage stating: "Use of hand sanitizer and food service gloves is required for all patrons in this area—Please use a new plate and a new glove for each trip to the buffet/salad bar".
  - Serving utensils should be replaced every sixty (60) minutes and/or every time a food item is replaced on the buffet.

- Reservations should be encouraged when practical. If reservations are not made, physical distancing should be maintained when customers are waiting to be seated.
- Staff and patrons should wear face coverings in accordance with the [Face Coverings Guidance](#). This guidance recommends face coverings at all times, except for persons consuming food or drink.
  - All staff who come in contact with patrons should wear a face covering that completely covers their nose and mouth. Staff in the cooking and food preparation areas should wear a face covering unless doing so inhibits their ability to safely perform their job duty due to extreme heat or open flame.
  - Patrons should wear a face covering while in the establishment when physical distancing of six (6) feet cannot be ensured. This is most likely in entry or waiting areas, while visiting a customer self-service area (buffet, salad bar, etc.), while walking to their seat, visiting the restroom, etc. Face coverings may be removed when food or drink arrives.
- Gloves used during food preparation should be worn in accordance with the Rules Pertaining to Retail Food Establishments. Glove use by waitstaff and others who do not directly contact food with their hands is optional.
- All staff should be screened daily before entering the facility. Any employee with a cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath should be immediately excluded from the facility.
- Signage should be placed at the front of restaurants to alert patrons not to enter the facility if they are sick or have symptoms such as cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath.
- Monitoring of frequent handwashing and no bare-hand contact of ready-to-eat foods by staff.
- Encourage customers to pre-order meals to reduce time spent in the facility. This includes for takeout services.
- Groups should be limited, not to exceed 10 people.
- Facilities with any employee testing positive shall report the positive result to the Arkansas Department of Health immediately.
- Following each meal service, the tables, chairs, menus and any other frequently contacted surfaces including, but not limited to, condiment containers, napkin holders and salt/pepper shakers should be cleaned and disinfected prior to seating the next customer.
- Products with an EPA-approved emerging viral pathogen claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for these products. For a list of EPA-approved emerging pathogen sanitizers: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>
- Food contact surfaces must be sanitized in accordance with §4-501.114 of the [Rules Pertaining to Retail Food Establishments](#).
- Single-Use items including, but not limited to, disposable silverware, cups,

lids, and straws should be removed from public access and provided only upon request, unless the Single-Use items are adequately protected from contamination through the use of dispensing devices or packaging.

- Bars housed within restaurants should ensure physical distancing of six (6) feet between individuals is maintained.
- Entertainment operations within restaurants (such as live music, in-seat gaming, or arcades) may occur. Entertainment involving performers, such as live music or singing, should follow these requirements:
  - The performers or players should be separated from the audience by at least 12 feet.
  - Performers or players should follow the Guidelines for Community and School Sponsored Music and Theater.
- In-seat gaming, arcades, billiards, and other games that patrons physically touch should be disinfected between each use.
- Restrooms and other high-touch areas should be disinfected frequently based on customer volume.
- Service may be declined to patrons who are not wearing face coverings.